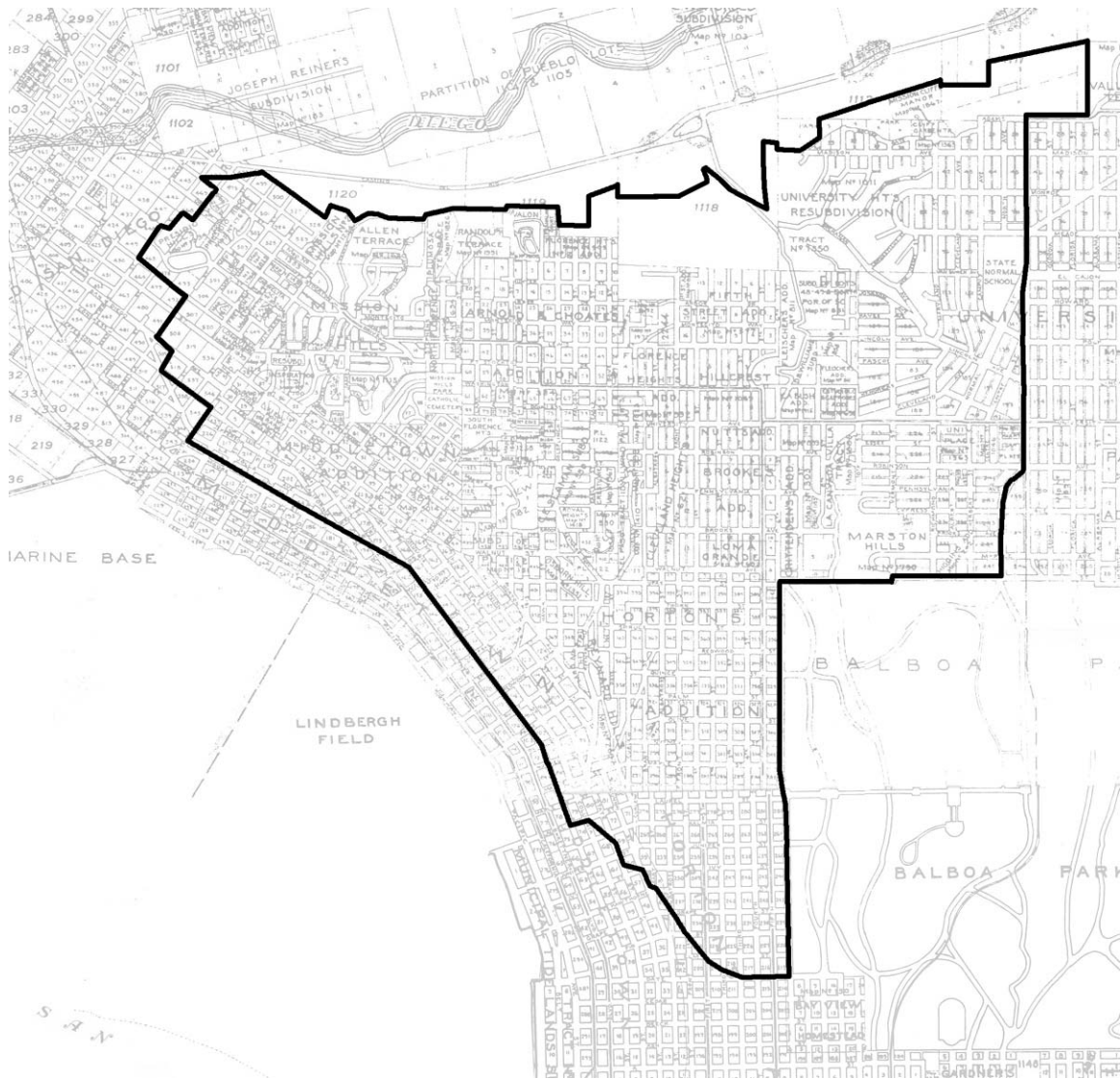


# Uptown Historic Context and Oral History Report



November 24, 2003

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Introduction

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of the Report

The Uptown Historic Context Report was commissioned by the City of San Diego and partially supported through a grant by the State of California Office of Historic Preservation. The purpose of the report was to develop an Historic Context for the culturally diverse Uptown community that discusses major trends and events that shaped the physical and cultural development of the community, and establishes a periods of significance context statements for social, geographical and architectural themes. Themes used in this context statement include transportation and development, George Marston and the Nolen Plan, business districts, public parks, World War II and post War development, the medical community, and civic, ethnic, religious, and minority groups.

B. Definition of Historic Context

In the National Register *Bulletin 24, Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*, the Historic Context is defined as a “broad pattern of historical development in a community or its region that may be represented by historic resources.” The bulletin goes on to explain that “historic contexts are developed on the basis of background data on the community’s history and the history and prehistory of the region in which it lies.” The development of an historic context allows city and state planners to better determine the significance of the built resources within the area of study.

C. Discussion of the Study Area and Structure of the Report

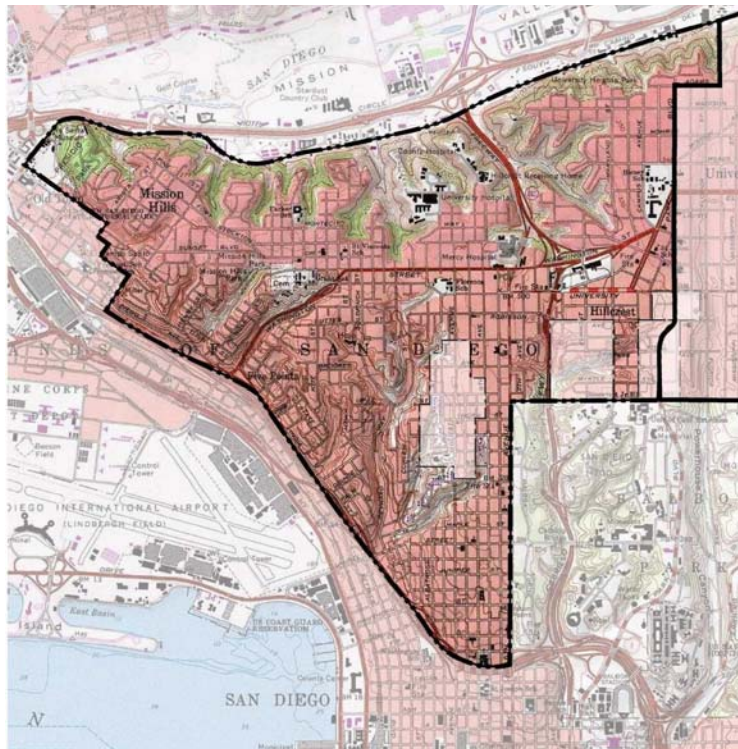


Figure 1: Map of Study Area

Introduction

The Uptown community planning area is located just north of the Center City area on a level mesa that is broken up by heavily vegetated canyons and bordered by two major parks, Presidio and Balboa. This gives the area a sense of seclusion from the city center and other surrounding communities, and provides a sense of openness. It is bounded on the north by the steep hillsides of Mission Valley, on the east by Park Boulevard and Balboa Park, and on the west and south by Old Town San Diego and Interstate 5. The planning area comprises about 2,700 acres or approximately 4.2 square miles (Community Plan 1988).

Analysis of the historical development of the Uptown District has been difficult at times due to the arbitrary nature of portions of its boundaries. Along its eastern edge, the study area includes only the west side of Park Boulevard, though, historically, both sides of the street developed as a single business district. In addition, historical development of neighborhoods directly east of the study area such as the communities of North Park and Normal Heights were intimately linked with the growth of University Heights and Hillcrest, but they have been excluded. Another problem occurs along the southern and western boundaries of the Uptown District where Interstate 5 has been used as a boundary. The freeway is a modern structure and does not define historic neighborhood borders. It bisects several historic neighborhoods and cuts off a large area between the freeway and "A" Street to the south from the Uptown District even though these blocks developed along with the tracts currently north of Interstate 5. Use of the freeway boundary also divides the Middletown tract, leaving the residential portion cut off from the historical business districts along India and Kettner Streets. This problem arises from using a modern structure such as a freeway to define the boundary of historic neighborhoods that predates the transportation corridors construction by over 50 years.

Finally, the application of the name Uptown to this study area goes against historical precedent. Historically, Uptown was that area north of A Street, West of Balboa Park, and south of Hillcrest. To apply the name of one historic area to the entire district confuses the identity of the original Uptown neighborhood. To avoid this confusion this study uses the term West Park Neighborhoods to refer to those blocks west of Balboa Park originally known as Uptown.

In light of the complex nature of the study area's boundaries, it is impossible to provide a concise history of the area without diminishing some of the area's influences. As noted above, the study area contains a variety of neighborhoods each with its unique development history. Furthermore, because of the artificial nature of the Uptown Planning District boundary, many factors affecting the historic development of the area have occurred outside of the district. For this reason, this report includes a Historic Overview of the City of San Diego as a general context to the neighborhoods within the study area. Within this chronological presentation the study area's development as well as that of individual neighborhoods is provided. The historic overview is then followed by a Statement of Current Conditions for each of the major neighborhoods within the study area. Finally, the Historic Context Statement defines historically significant themes in the study area and describes the property types associated with those themes.